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Technical cooperation among developing countries

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High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries
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Draft report

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III. Reports on implementation

(Agenda items 2, 3 and 4)

A. Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations as the President of the Committee at its twelfth session

1. In calling the meeting to order, the President highlighted the importance of the South in terms of its population, the diversity of its bio-resources, the vastness of its energy resources and therefore its significance for sustainable human development. Referring to his participation in the recently concluded Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs), including the final agreement on a programme of action, he observed that these meetings have a common thread: strategies for international development encompassing the countries of the South. He also recalled the high priority accorded to South-South cooperation at the South Summit last year and urged the Committee to devise ways and means for converting the rhetoric into practical measures.

2. He highlighted the message of cooperation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and more specifically of the new directions strategy. In this context, he emphasized the need for partnerships, networks, institutional mechanisms, resources, policies, concrete actions and cooperative arrangements for accelerating human development and eliminating poverty in the South. At the same time, he urged intensive partnership and collaboration among the countries of the South for equitable socio-economic progress.

3. The President expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General in responding to the needs of the international community. He also praised UNDP

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and the Special Unit for TCDC for supporting South-South cooperation generally and especially in the United Nations system.

B. Statement by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

4. In his opening statement, the Administrator welcomed the new Director of the Special Unit for TCDC, Madame Safiatou Ba-N'Daw, and paid tribute to Mr. Francis Blain, who, as Officer-in-Charge, had been responsible for all the preparations for the meeting and who has given devoted service to the Special Unit for TCDC.

5. The Administrator recalled that many of the development goals put forth in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action 23 years ago were reiterated in the goals set by the world leaders at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. He observed that then and now, world leaders have committed themselves to creating a world free of the misery bred by poverty and that, while international efforts to correct disparities between the rich and the poor had begun in the 1940s, unfortunately, the imbalances still exist. New tools, new thinking, new partnerships, new business models, new knowledge and a more generous funding base are required to achieve the development goals set for 2015.

6. He noted that developing countries that have reached a relatively high level of human development are already assuming a lead role and have become the main hubs and benefactors of South-South cooperation. Simultaneously, South-South cooperation has also become a big tent with room for northern development partners, especially in research and development efforts requiring both a critical mass of expertise and complementary financial resources. The Administrator cited the development of NERICA (New Rice for Africa) in West Africa as a model of inclusive South-South cooperation with room for northern partners and inputs and observed that cooperation of a similar nature was urgently needed in combating HIV/AIDS. Developing countries could provide successful models for handling the problem, but donor assistance — both research and financing — was also needed, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his call for $7-10 billion of additional assistance during the General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS.

7. The Administrator welcomed the decision of the first meeting of the High-level Committee in the new millennium to devote its time to the consideration of science and technology for development. He noted that while the old motto for South-South cooperation was "building bridges across the South", the thinking today must focus on "placing the South on the twenty-first century's global super highways". He expressed the hope that the revolution in information and communications technology would contribute significantly to bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. He warned, however, that this would not happen automatically. Strategies to promote necessary human and physical infrastructure need to be adopted in all developing countries, with assistance from international development partners where necessary. The forthcoming Human Development Report will focus primarily on the impact of biotechnology and information technology.

8. He reiterated the commitment of UNDP to remain "the developing countries' development organization" and to "continue as a reliable source of funding for

South-South cooperation". TCDC, he added, would remain the first and the preferred approach in the delivery of services to the developing countries. He also restated his commitment, made at the Third United Nations Conference on LDCs in Brussels, that UNDP seeks to boost South-South cooperation as an area with particular potential for LDCs. He expressed his strong support for the view stressed in the Programme of Action adopted in the South Summit that "South-South cooperation is a crucially important tool for developing and strengthening the economic independence of developing countries".

C. Introduction of the reports by the Director of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries: highlights of the progress reports

9. The Director of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries introduced the three reports for the consideration of the High-level Committee. She explained that the reports are based on information gathered through responses to questionnaires received from Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system, including regional commissions, and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as information from various reports and data generated through the activities and contacts of the Special Unit for TCDC.

Comprehensive biennial report of the progress made in the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action as well as the decisions of the High-level Committee

10. The report indicates that developing countries increasingly realize that greater use of the TCDC modality is warranted to seize the opportunities presented by globalization. In fact, a large number of developing countries have improved the institutional and policy environment for TCDC. They are also providing more financial and technical resources for capacity-building in other developing countries, with the highest level of cooperation in the area of human resource development. There is also significant growth in two-way exchanges between developing countries. In addition, collaborative efforts to identify and address common issues of interest are increasing and there is substantial growth in regional and interregional TCDC initiatives.

11. At the same time, greater donor support is observed for third-country training programmes and the use of southern experts and institutions in delivering technical cooperation. Support to centres of excellence in the developing countries, strengthening of networks of southern institutions and a thematic programme approach are some of the instruments adopted by many donors to finance TCDC initiatives. Support to both technical and economic cooperation among developing countries (TCDC and ECDC) is increasingly provided through triangular arrangements.

12. The review confirms that the United Nations development system as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are placing emphasis on regional cooperation programmes, networking, research and development, and the analysis and solution of pressing issues relating to globalization. All United Nations organizations are geared to supporting TCDC and many of them have devised

special modalities for this purpose, e.g., the Special Programme for Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), South-South Trade Promotion Programme of the International Trade Centre, Entrepreneurship Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EMPTREC) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Partners in Population and Development Programme of the United Nations Population Fund, and the Programme of Inter-country Cooperation for Health Development in the Twenty-first Century of the World Health Organization.

13. Further to its traditional role as the main source of funding for TCDC, UNDP has moved forward in its role as South-South knowledge broker with the launch of the Web of Information for Development (WIDE), which provides an array of information services. It is also pioneering such flagship initiatives as a participatory approach to programme development, which involves a large number of partners in a platform of diverse activities focusing on specific development issues.

14. The review recommends a redoubling of efforts by developing countries and the preparation of programmes suitable for wider partnerships and financial support under triangular arrangements. Developing countries should also improve the coordination of their numerous initiatives on addressing difficult development problems. The United Nations development system should also increase its efforts to mainstream TCDC and link its information systems to make them easily available to developing countries. Finally, the report recommends greater donor support for TCDC.

Biennial report on the progress made in the implementation of the new directions strategy for technical cooperation among developing countries

15. The report notes significant progress in implementing the new directions strategy, especially in areas such as the strategic orientation of TCDC activities, advancing TCDC through pivotal countries, new developments in triangular cooperation, sharing knowledge and experiences and the integration of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries.

16. The review finds that many complex issues of common interest have compelled groups of countries to pool their limited resources to address them jointly and develop common positions, particularly in meeting the challenges of globalization. The strategic importance of science and technology in the emerging knowledge society has induced developing countries to collaborate and seek solutions through concerted efforts. Private sector development through interregional initiatives such as the Africa-Asia Business Forum have also led to TCDC and ECDC involving large numbers of countries and parties promoting both trade and investment.

17. Pivotal countries have served as major hubs for and benefactors of TCDC during the reporting period, contributing to human resource development and the strengthening of institutional capacity in the developing countries. They have also played a crucial part in the promotion of trade and investment, albeit with resource support under triangular arrangements. However, the potential for developing flagship programmes or the exploitation of pivotal-country resources in information technology or investment has been less than optimal due to the lack of coordination and frequent use of ad hoc measures.

18. The review confirms that triangular cooperation has provided an avenue for using aid more effectively. Technical cooperation has been more relevant and less costly under triangular arrangements. With less aid, donors have delivered larger and more appropriate services to the recipient countries and strengthened partnerships among many recipients.

19. The review also finds that South-South channels of communication have expanded and the Special Unit for TCDC has played a vital role in this expansion, with the collaboration of both developed and developing countries. However, WIDE, launched by UNDP in 2000, needs to be enriched by linkages with information systems in the United Nations development system as well as with other databases maintained by regional or learned bodies.

20. It is further observed that TCDC activities are beginning to address a broad mix of socio-economic development issues, leading to the much-needed integration of TCDC and ECDC. As development thinking shifts towards sustainable human development and parallel good governance and economic development, South-South initiatives are required to move easily from technical collaboration to joint efforts in social and economic development.

Consideration of the reports of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

21. The report states that the Guidelines for the review of policies and procedures concerning TCDC are being followed by all United Nations organizations, which have designated TCDC focal points; most of them have also adopted special modalities to use TCDC in their operational activities. However, while TCDC and ECDC were widely practised, much of the information on TCDC and ECDC activities was not being captured by the respective reporting systems. A United Nations system-wide common results framework has been prepared and should be included in the Guidelines. All organizations should report on normative and operational results indicators as well as innovative approaches to TCDC and ECDC and include successful practices that could be replicated.

22. Most organizations have invested heavily in creating databases and information systems, some of which have proved to be very helpful to the developing countries, e.g., the FAO Emergency Prevention System for Trans-boundary Animal and Plant Pest and Diseases Programme, Local Government Training and Research Institutes Network (LOGOTRI) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) or WIPONET of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). It recommended that the compilation of best practices should be increased and linkages between information systems of United Nations organizations and WIDE should be placed on a regular and firmer footing.

23. The report briefly covered the Voluntary Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation, noting the low level of contributions ($487,000) for the biennium under consideration, and urged a special effort to mobilize additional resources. It also provided a review of the Forum on South-South Cooperation in Science and Technology held in Seoul in 2000.

24. The report indicated that the Special Unit for TCDC functioned with seven Professional and seven General Service staff during the biennium. It managed $8.5

million in core resources and mobilized $11.9 million in non-core resources. The Special Unit for TCDC developed and piloted flagship programmes with a view to forging broader partnerships and mobilizing increased resources for decentralized programmes in the field. It also decided to outpost two officers to the field to promote this kind of activity.